



COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

JUNE 2026

INTRODUCTION

By Steve Maher, Coordinator of Our Valley Our Future

In October 2025, Our Valley Our Future (OVOF) began the development of the region's third five-year Action Plan, for the years 2027-31. As with the previous two Action Plans, OVOF engaged residents of Chelan and Douglas counties for their assessment of the region and their ideas on how to improve the quality of life for all.

This “community visioning” process, coupled with quantitative data and a trends analysis, is foundational in developing the new Action Plan and serves as a resource for other planning efforts across the region.

This report shares the results from Phase 2: Engaging the Community. OVOF's phased approach to develop the 2027-31 Action Plan is the same process used for the Action Plans published in 2017 and 2022.



In Phase 2, a community survey, interviews, and listening sessions provided answers to key questions:

- What do you value most about living in our valley?
- What is one way you see our valley changing now?
- What is the biggest challenge for the future of our valley?
- What is our valley's greatest strength as a place to live?
- What is our valley's greatest weakness as a place to live?
- What is one 'vision idea' you have for the future of our valley?

For comparative purposes, four of the questions — values, changes, challenges, vision ideas — were asked during the development of the last two Action Plans. Tracking answers helps OVOF and other organizations determine how public perceptions are changing over time.

Now, OVOF is in Phase 3 of developing the 2027-31 Action Plan. The content featured in this report is being utilized by six Action Teams, groups of volunteers that analyze and vet ideas from Phase 2. Action Team members represent multiple sectors and are considered knowledgeable in their field.

Action Teams will turn what residents have told OVOF into actionable projects and programs. Action Teams are organized by OVOF's focus areas:



**SHARED
PROSPERITY**



**SAFE, HEALTHY,
SUPPORTED PEOPLE**



**WELL-PLANNED
REGION**



**EDUCATED AND
INSPIRED PEOPLE**



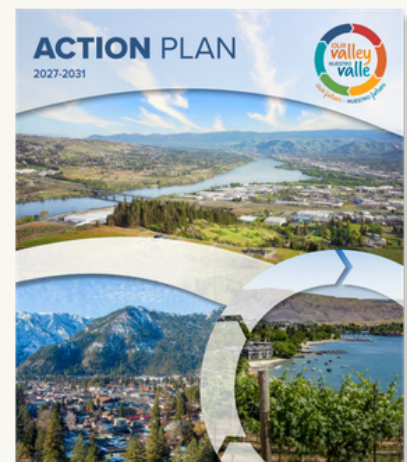
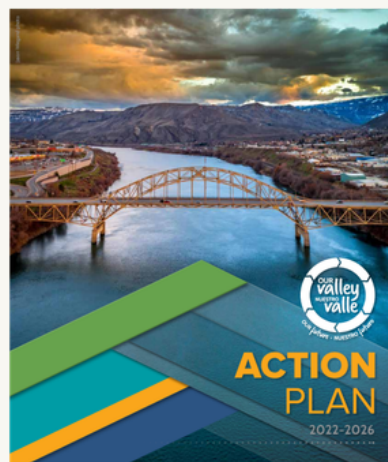
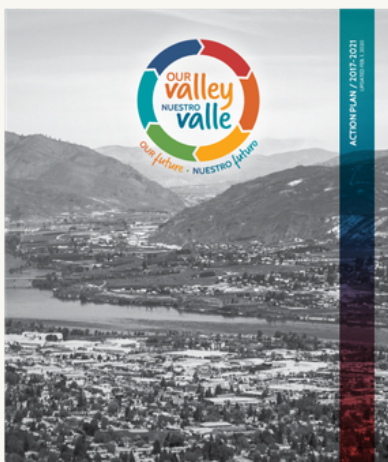
**SUSTAINABLE
ENVIRONMENT**



**INCLUSIVE AND ENGAGED
COMMUNITIES**

During Phase 4, residents will be invited to provide feedback on the recommended projects and programs. Feedback will revise and prioritize the Action Team's recommendations.

The final 2027-31 Action Plan will be released in early 2027.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

To collect information for the 2027-31 Action Plan, Our Valley Our Future engaged Chelan and Douglas County residents through a survey, listening sessions, stakeholder interviews, and community events or meetings.

In total, 2,669 residents were engaged during Phase 2 of the 2027-31 Action Plan development.



701 respondents to the community survey



20 listening sessions with **269** total participants



57 interviews with stakeholders, leaders, and influencers



1,647 residents engaged through events and meetings

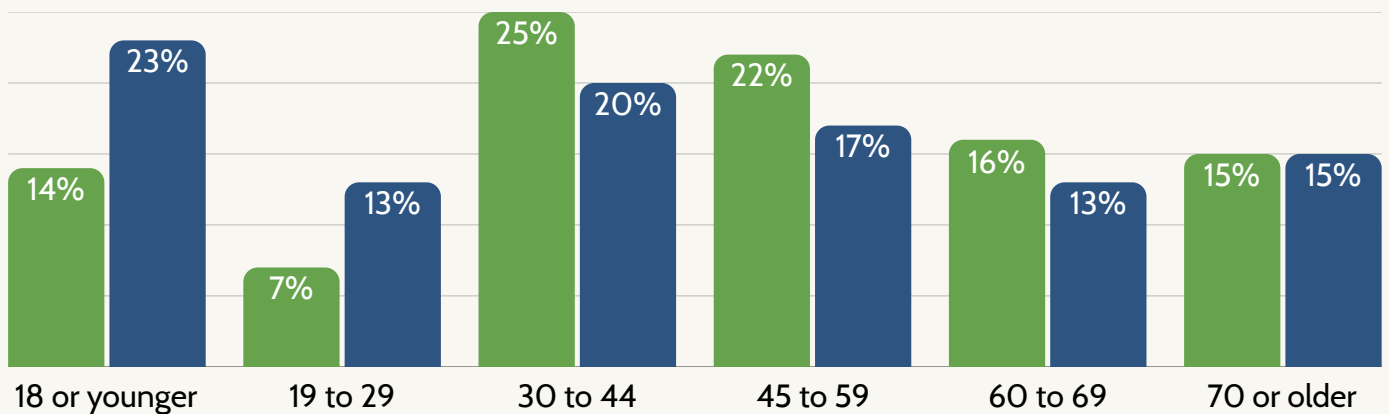


Photo Credit: Andrew Simpson / Ward Media

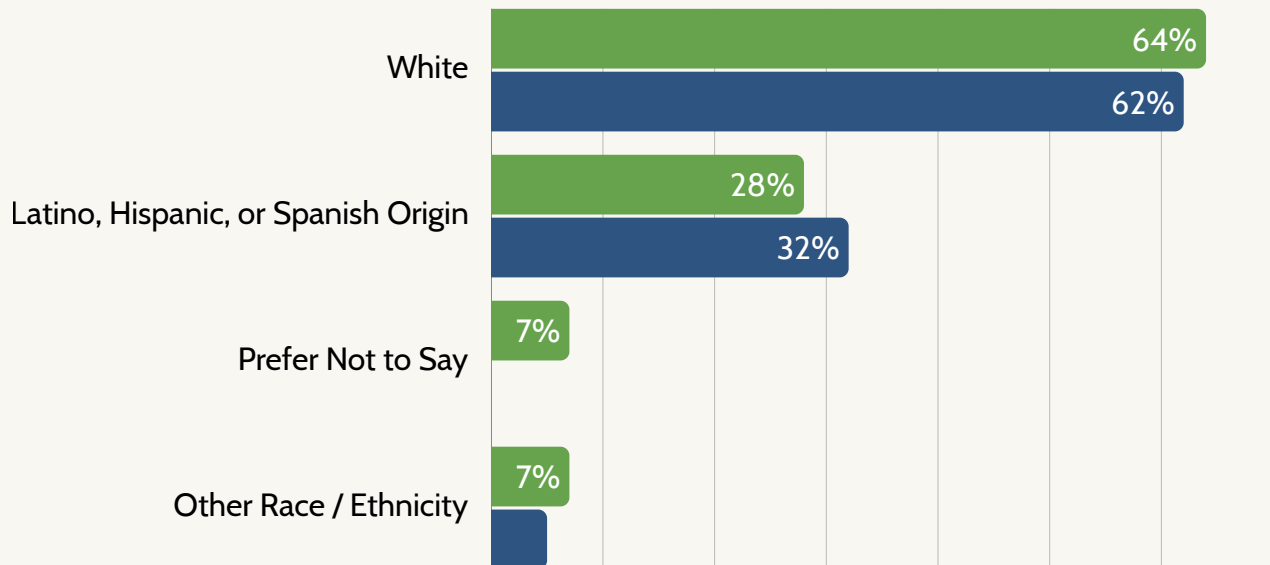
Survey

The community survey opened March 2 and closed May 31. It was provided in English and Spanish. The majority of respondents responded online. Some responded with a paper version through partner organizations.

Aside from those under 30 years old, the age of **Survey Respondents** closely aligns with the population of **Chelan & Douglas Counties**.

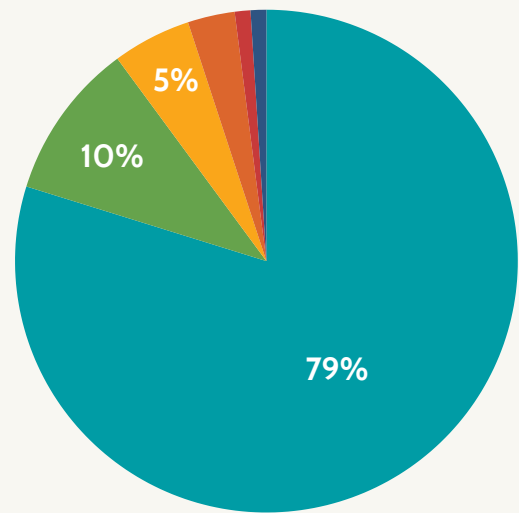
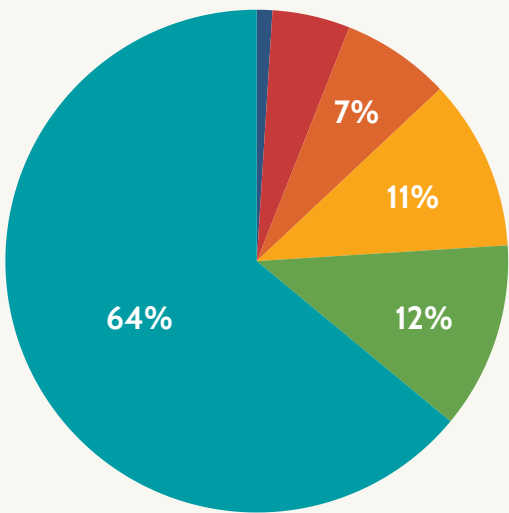
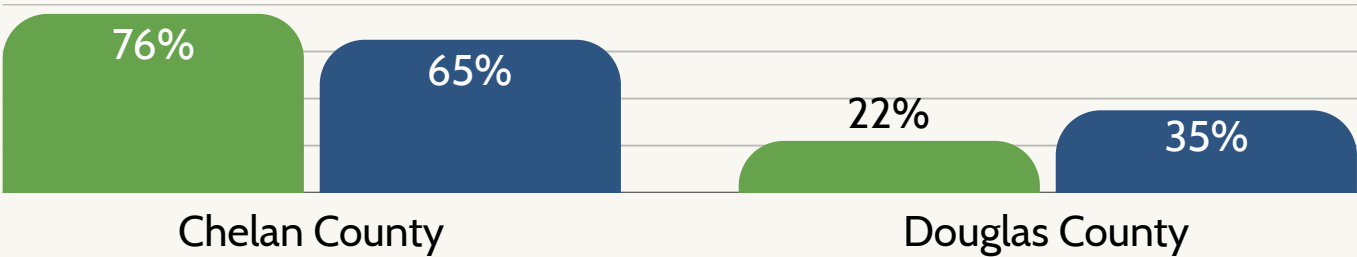


The race / ethnicity of **Survey Respondents** closely aligns with the population of **Chelan & Douglas Counties**.



The total responses equal more than 100 percent as some respondents selected more than one race/ethnicity.

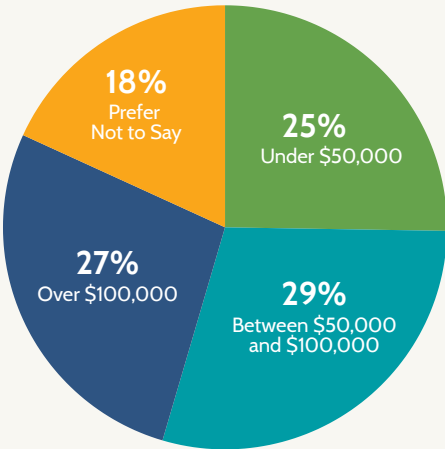
The majority **Survey Respondents** reside in Chelan County, outweighing the general population of **Chelan & Douglas Counties**.



Respondents' Personal Annual Income

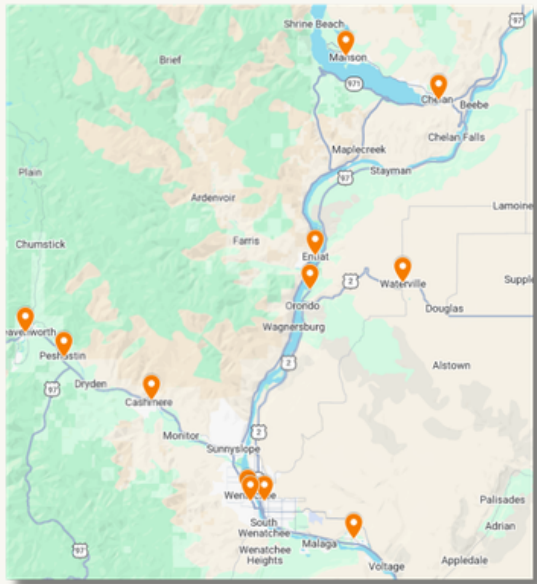
*The average personal income for Chelan & Douglas Counties in 2024 was **\$66,105**.*

U.S. Department of Commerce



Listening Sessions

Our Valley Our Future sought residents' perspective on the region, their individual community, and their experience through 20 listening sessions, conducted in both English and Spanish. Listening sessions were facilitated and hosted across Chelan and Douglas Counties



Place Based Sessions

Cashmere	Orondo
Chelan	Peshastin
East Wenatchee	Rock Island
Entiat	Waterville
Leavenworth	South Wenatchee
Manson	Wenatchee

Communities of Interest

Our Valley Our Future also hosted listening sessions with trusted community partners to connect with groups of residents.

Business Owners	Healthcare Workers	Latino Leaders
College Students	High School Students	Veterans
Farmworkers	Immigrants	Social Service Workers



MAIN FINDINGS

Values Hold Steady

Core community values are the beliefs, principles, and norms that individuals within a community hold in common and care deeply about. They unify community and create a sense of belonging among residents, leading to more effective collaboration and a greater sense of purpose and direction.

Compared to a decade ago when OVOF developed the first Action Plan, the region's values remain the same. The following are the values mentioned the most across the survey, listening sessions, and stakeholder interviews.

Natural Environment

Scenery, open spaces, mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, wildlife, plant life.

Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Year-round activities for a variety of skillsets, age groups, and income levels.

Community Connectedness

Sense of community, small-town feel, collaboration, cohesion, volunteerism.

Services and Amenities

Affordable utilities, transportation benefits, and arts and culture experiences.

Public Safety

Low crime rates across the region and a general feeling of safety due to the familiarity of people in the community.

Rural-Urban Balance

Residents' appreciation of having both lifestyles present in the region. This is a new core value not mentioned previously.

Change, Change, Change

Residents shared that Chelan and Douglas Counties continue to experience change in several key areas.

Population growth continues to be the most cited change. During the pandemic in 2021, people called attention to an influx of remote workers, younger people, retirees, and visitors. This year, residents talked about growth as something continuous or consistent.

Housing issues remain high on residents' list of changes. Many essential workers and younger people are priced out of the housing market and have considered relocating. In the same vein, residents cited the increase in construction of a variety of housing types.

Discord was cited by residents, rooted in politics, religious influence, lifestyles, and culture. During the pandemic in 2021, discord was definitely present as well but it has morphed and not receded as many hoped.

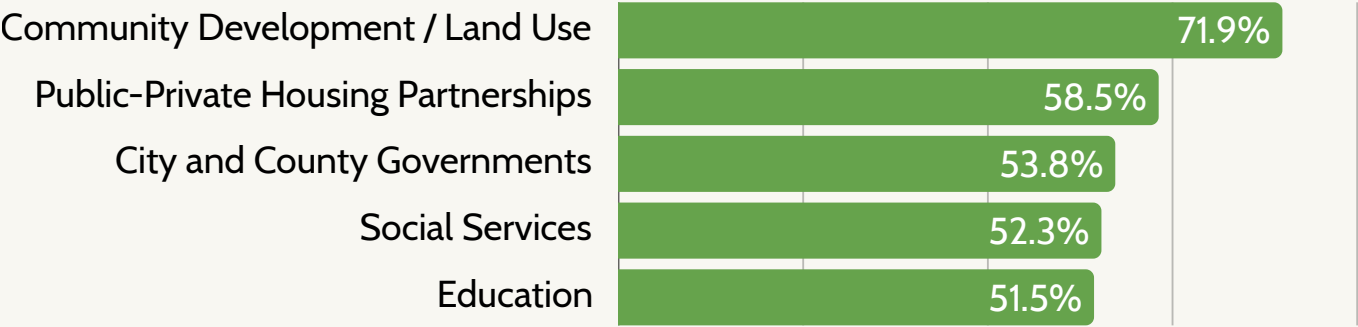
Economic inequities were cited as something that began in the pandemic and have exacerbated since then. These inequities are reflected in food insecurity, homelessness, and a lack of healthcare access.

Agriculture, both the industry itself and presence of orchards, was cited as an ongoing change. Residents shared that more small orchards are going away, more automation is occurring in the packing sheds, and there are more costs and mounting losses for businesses.

Collaboration

84% of survey respondents said there should be more collaboration in the region.

Areas survey respondents want to see more collaboration.



Weight of Growth and Other Big Challenges

Across all outreach methods, *managing continued growth* was identified by residents as the top challenge for Chelan and Douglas Counties.

Other significant challenges mentioned by residents were the need for affordable housing, threats to the natural environment and resources, spikes in the cost of living, decline in healthcare and mental health services, and transportation infrastructure. Residents express fear that treasured attributes may be lost forever. There is a call for greater resiliency — whether it's more housing or forest management or preventing overuse of resources.

There is recognition from some residents that factors outside the local region are impacting challenges.

Top community challenges, rated by survey respondents.



Community Tensions

Across the survey, listening sessions, and stakeholder interviews, residents contradicted each other, which reflects a community in genuine tension with different groups experiencing the same region in fundamentally different ways.

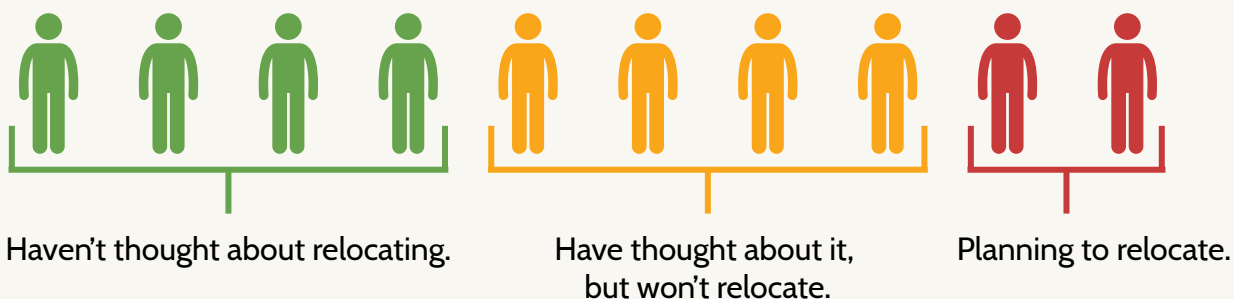
On one hand, some residents say they value the region's long-standing sense of community and friendliness. On the other hand, some residents say community divisiveness is tearing the social fabric apart.

On one hand, community stakeholders believe they are engaged in a lot of collaborative projects. Meanwhile, the general public shared through the survey and listening sessions that much more collaboration is needed.

On one hand, some residents decry orchards being torn out for homes and vertical housing construction (e.g. Majestic Apartments in Downtown Wenatchee). On the other hand, some want the housing stock to increase and see a lack of buildable land.

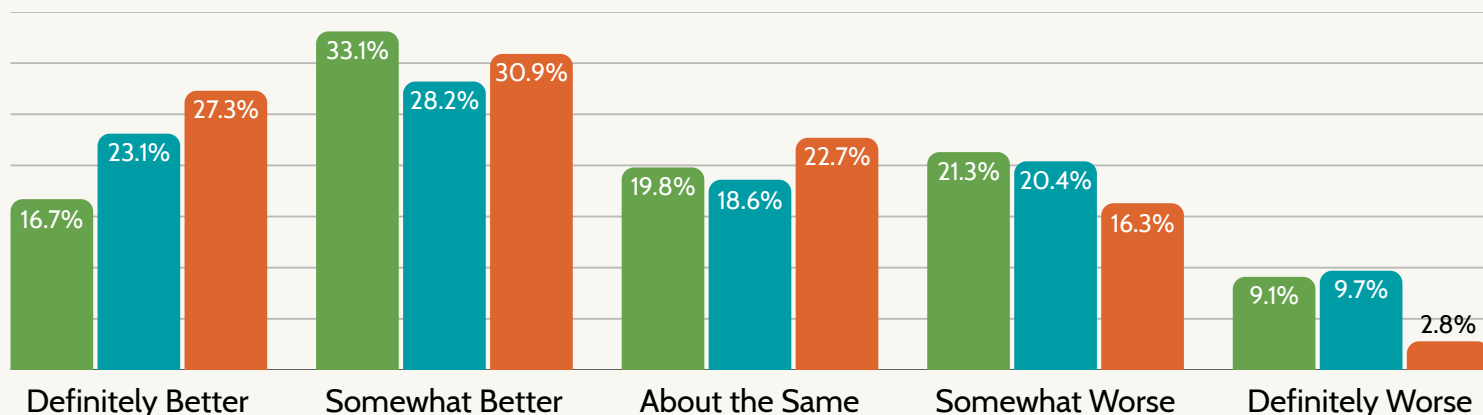
Cost of Living

For survey respondents, due to the rising cost of living and lagging income levels....



Optimism Declined

When asked whether the region would be a better or worse place to live in the future, **respondents in 2026** were less optimistic compared to **2021 respondents** and **respondents from 10 years ago**.



STAY ENGAGED



Provide feedback this fall on the recommended projects and programs from Action Teams for the 2027-31 Action Plan.



Sign up for OVOF's monthly e-newsletter, available in English and Spanish, at ourvalleyourfuture.org.



Follow us on social media.

THANK YOU

This report was written by Steve Maher, OVOF coordinator, and edited and designed by Rachel Evey, OVOF executive director.

Thank you to listening session location hosts: CAFÉ, Cashmere Library, Chelan Douglas Community Action Council, City of East Wenatchee, Entiat Library, Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce, Leavenworth Library, Manson Library, Orondo School District, Parque Padrinos at Methow Park, Peshastin Library, Rock Island Fire Station, Waterville Library, Wenatchee High School AVID, Wenatchee Library, Wenatchee Valley College, Wenatchee Valley Veterans Hall.

Thank you to our Action Plan Gold Sponsors.



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Our mission is to empower the people and organizations of Our Valley to co-create and achieve our region's shared vision.

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